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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 001240

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CCA, WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/09/2015

TAGS: ETTC PREL CU HO

SUBJECT: TEGUCIGALPA RESPONSE TO NSC-DIRECTED REVIEW

REGARDING WAIVER OF TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: STATE 96300

Classified By: A/DCM PAUL TUEBNER; REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) The Government of Honduras (GOH) has actively worked to advance democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms in Cuba. On April 15, 2004, the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) passed a Honduran-sponsored resolution calling for greater respect for human rights in Cuba. In April 2005, Honduras voted with the United States on the UNCHR 2005 resolution, which also called for greater respect for human rights in Cuba.

¶2. (C) On April 19, 2005 Honduran MFA Vice Minister AMB Mario Fortin pledged to vote against the Cuban UNCHR resolution on the Guantanamo detainees, if it came to a vote. This stance was consistent with their position on the 2004 Cuban resolution on the detainees, before that resolution was dropped.

¶3. (C) Honduras has not named an Ambassador to Cuba, partly out of deference to U.S. wishes. The GOH consistently and publicly states that concern over Cuba's human rights policies is a fundamental tenet of its policy toward the Castro regime. Last year, PolCouns met with the new Honduran Charge d'Affaires in Havana, Humberto Lopez Villamil, prior to his recent departure to Havana to emphasize the importance of human rights in Cuba. Villamil welcomed the meeting and indicated he would seek out the U.S. Interests Section in Havana.

¶4. (C) In addition, the GOH has accepted 20 Cubans resettled by the International Organization of Migration (IOM). The GOH did this despite a possible negative reaction from the GOC.

¶5. (SBU) Post has requested information on investments made in Cuba by Honduran individuals or companies. The Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Central Bank just began collecting information on Honduran investments abroad, and are preparing a preliminary report. Last year, for the first time, the Central Bank has added a question on Honduran investment abroad to its annual questionnaire of Honduran companies. Figures will be forthcoming; however, based upon ECONOFF conversation with the chief economist from the Central Bank, we do not expect any significant Honduran investments in Cuba throughout 2004.

¶6. (C) If the Title III waiver were not renewed for Honduras, it could undermine clear GOH support for pressuring Cuba to improve its human rights record, undermine general GOH support for U.S. Cuba policy, and unnecessarily punish a supportive regional ally.

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